A/AC.198/1997/CRP.1
14 August 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION
Nineteenth session
13-19 May and 3-8 September 1997

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON THE REORIENTATION OF UNITED NATIONS PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES

Note by the secretariat

Annexed herewith is the report of the Task Force on the Reorientation of United Nations Public Information activities, entitled "Global vision, local voice: a strategic communications programme for the United Nations". The report was presented to the Executive Coordinator for United Nations Reform for transmission to the Secretary-General on 27 June 1997. It is being made available to the members of the Committee on Information for consideration at the resumed nineteenth session.

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ANNEX

Global Vision, Local Voice

A strategic communications programme for the United Nations

Report of the Task Force on the Reorientation of United Nations Public Information Activities

This Report was presented to the Executive Coordinator for UN Reform for transmission to the Secretary-General on 27 June 1997.

United Nations
New York . August 1997

The Secretary-General

From the Secretary-General's 17 March 1997 letter, "Strengthening of the United Nations System," addressed to the President of the General Assembly.

We must ensure that the tale of the activities of the United Nations is told with more vigour and purpose and to greater effect. Towards this end, I have concluded that a sweeping revamping of the United Nations' public information capacity is an urgent requirement. Revamping these services would be in line with intergovernmental recommendations which have already been made. Action to implement these recommendations has not kept pace, however, with the urgent nature of the problem. There is a need to go further.

The reorientation of public information will be designed to have three principal effects. First, United Nations information activities will in future be geared to providing communications and outreach services to the media, non-governmental organizations and other re-disseminators, utilizing the latest media technologies and techniques. Second, the information capacity of the Secretariat will be more intimately linked with and directly supportive of the activities of the substantive departments. Third, resources will be decentralized and refocussed to the country and regional levels and greater use made of local resources. The process of integrating those United Nations Information Centres serving developing countries into the Resident Coordinator's Office will be completed. I would also hope to see information coverage of all Member States that desire it as a result of these changes.

The Task Force

The following were appointed on 23 April 1997 by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the Task Force on the Reorientation of United Nations Public Information Activities:

Mr. Mark Malloch Brown (Chairman)
Vice President External Affairs/United Nations Affairs, World Bank

Mr. Peter Arnett
Foreign Correspondent, CNN

Ms. Joan Ganz Cooney
Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Children's Television Workshop

Ms. Raghida Dergham
Senior Diplomatic Correspondent, Al-Hayat; President,
UN Correspondents Association

Mr. Djibril Diallo
Director of Public Affairs, UN Development Programme

Mr. Lelei Lelaulu (Secretary)
Office of the Executive Coordinator for United Nations Reform;
Editor, *Secretariat News*

Mr. M. Salim Lone (Rapporteur)
Chief of Publications, Department of Public Information, United Nations

Mr. Hironobu Shibuya
President of Pacific Basin Partners, Inc.

Ambassador Juan Somavia
Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations

Ms. Kathleen Newland
Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
was subsequently engaged by the Task Force as Advisor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Chairman and members of the Task Force would like to express their appreciation to the communications experts, delegates, journalists (including UN correspondents), representatives of non-governmental organizations and senior United Nations officials and staff who generously gave their time for the consultations and discussions that preceded the formulation of this Report.

NOTE ON THE TASK FORCE REPORT

The Secretary-General, after reviewing this Task Force report, indicated in his 16 July 1997 report to the General Assembly—*Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*—that he "strongly supports the principle of consolidation of communications activities under a senior official, and the main thrust of the Task Force report."

The Secretary-General has asked the Executive Coordinator for United Nations Reform to review the Report and formulate recommendations for an implementation plan.

Task Force Rapporteur, 4 August 1997

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The United Nations remains well respected. Even in the United States, thought to be home to the Organization's most persistent critics, more than 60 per cent of Americans, when polled, routinely express support for the Organization.

2. But this support is generally "soft," and the respect only occasionally gets translated into strong public backing. In such an environment, determined minorities suspicious of the UN agenda can have a disproportionate influence on national policy towards the UN. So while political setbacks as in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda do take their toll, more lasting damage is being inflicted worldwide by the perception of the Organization as a distant, global bureaucracy with little direct relevance to the lives of ordinary people.

3. This need not be so. Poll after poll, in both industrialized and developing countries, shows that people's concerns revolve around issues which are on the core UN agenda: fighting crime, drugs and disease, securing employment, education and social services, promoting development, protecting the environment and human rights. But only rarely is UN ownership and relevance to them recognized nationally.

4. The UN's internationalism, worldwide presence and agenda have the potential to make people everywhere recognize it as an indispensable global institution. Governments continue to treat the UN as the principal world forum through which to press their national and regional concerns, and the growing number of activists, public interest groups and other representatives of strengthened civil societies also see it as a forum through which their ideas might capture the world's imagination.

5. While some of the problems about the perception of the Organization can be addressed by better communications and advocacy work, any significant improvement in global support will only take place if this is accompanied by reforms in the way the UN conducts its business. No less important is the need to position the Organization in a manner which plays to its unique strengths, which include its capacity to mobilize multilaterally for the delivery of services of direct interest to societies worldwide. The reform programme that the Secretary-General has initiated is therefore a minimum threshold requirement for restoring universal public confidence in the Organization. Good communications will reinforce the reform process internally and externally.

6. The following principles should guide the new communications strategy of the United Nations:

a) The communications function should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the Organization; its image—indeed its long-term survival—depends upon effectively communicating its message and its activities to an increasingly cost-resistant world.

b) The UN's global messages, activities and information must both reflect and be tailored to meaningful local contexts. This will require more effective central management capacity, a high degree of delegation to adequately-resourced country-level communications programmes, and a significantly strengthened two-way flow of information.

c) The UN is principally a forum for the exchange of ideas. We argue that in some senses the UN can be thought of as a global communications agency. A culture of communications must therefore pervade the entire Organization, with responsibility for public diplomacy borne by all senior officials, ambassadors and the larger UN family.

d) The issues to which Member States are committed must be framed by communicators in terms that have relevance to their audiences; an emphasis on abstract principles has contributed to the UN's weakened impact on public perceptions. Campaigns should draw in the global UN system as, in many cases, it is the UN family of agencies, rather than the Secretariat, which can catch public attention more effectively.

e) The Secretary-General's role is central in today's communications environment, in which organizations are personified by their chief executives.

f) The General Assembly and its Committee on Information should provide strategic guidance and direction to the communications function, with the Secretariat given much greater responsibility for determining the methods with which mandated goals will be met.

g) There must be flexibility to deploy resources on emerging priorities such as the current need to focus on strengthening public support in the United States

h) The institutional image of the UN must delineate the two separate functions that give it its stature: as the unique global forum for debate, contention and ultimate consensus among Member States; and as spokesman, advocate and implementer of that consensus, through the Secretary-General, the Secretariat and the entire UN system.

7. The Task Force undertook a review of the existing communications arrangements serving the Secretariat: the Department of Public Information, the Office of the Spokesman of the Secretary-General, the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for External Relations and the Speechwriting Unit.

8. The review revealed the many strengths and high-quality efforts of these units. But among weaknesses which need to be addressed are the inexplicable absence of an organizational communications strategy; the dispersion of responsibilities for communications across the four units without any overall direction or coordination of activities; and the commitment of the bulk of the communications' budget to disseminating institutional information—which in essence describes the work and priorities of the Organization—without adequately catering to strategic communication, which is dezigned to enhance the Organization's substantive capacities through strengthening its global leadership position and through building support among its crucial constituencies.

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9. To achieve the new communications goals and to translate the enumerated principles into practice, the Task Force recommends the following strategic communications priorities and structure through which UN leadership and public support could be strengthened globally:

a) Since effective communications are central to successful policy-making, the senior official in charge of communications should be part of the Secretary-General's innermost policy-making circle and of other policy-coordination groups.

b) The ability to communicate ideas to a global audience is the Organization's principal comparative advantage, so the United Nations must invest in building a substantial communications capacity. And while there is need to consolidate, streamline or eliminate some functions in order to serve the new priorities, the Task Force believes that disproportionate cuts in communications have gone far enough.

c) With the integration of UN field offices, UN Resident Coordinators must recognize country-level communications strategies as one of their major responsibilities.

d) New skills are needed to meet the urgent challenge of an effective communications strategy. The Department should be given the authority to appoint people with the needed skills, and redeploy staff as required, in accordance with administrative procedures.

e) The existing communications entities (Spokesman's Office, Speechwriting, External Affairs and DPI) should be unified in a Department of Communications to be headed, ideally, by an Under-Secretary-General for Communications.

f) **The Under-Secretary-General for Communications (USG/C)** would be the principal strategist for UN communications policy; assume direct responsibility for liaison with the General Assembly and the Committee on Information; construct a coordinated strategic communications blueprint in cooperation with Secretariat departments and the principal entities of the UN system. In addition, the USG/C would manage the three main functions at UN Headquarters, and coordinate the fourth.

g) **Media Services:** A major function of the new Department will be an activist media strategy supported by a strong, news-oriented delivery of media services, taking into account the reality of the non-stop, 24-hour news cycle. A strengthened Office of the Spokesman should be part of this function, which might be managed by a separate director to ensure that the Spokesman's direct access to the Secretary-General is not disrupted.

h) **Public Affairs:** This function would be the advocacy engine of the new communications structure, and among its principal responsibilities would be the strengthening of links with the rapidly-growing group of new actors and organizations which influence opinion and policy worldwide. These groups are potentially the most important constituencies and allies of the United Nations in every world region. The current External Relations and Speechwriting units would form part of this function.

i) **Information Resources:** An open, transparent and accessible United Nations is essential to building support for the Organization, so the provision of information to its many audiences—delegates, scholars, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media—continues to grow in importance. This function would include the Library, the Publications Service, and an adequately-resourced Internet operation.

j) **UN Communications Services (UNaCS):** This function would incorporate the complex, ongoing process of integrating information centres under resident coordinators. Two separate models are recommended: in industrialized countries, the Department should explore the possibility of forming partnerships with the NGO sector in order to amplify the United Nations outreach. In developing countries, Resident Coordinators would be responsible to the USG/C for developing and executing communications plans. In both cases, staff should be hired locally. Also recommended are free-standing Communications Services Centres in a few countries to serve as regional hubs for the network of UNaCS and for countries without UNaCS.

GLOBAL VISION, LOCAL VOICE: THE REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON REORIENTATION OF UN PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES

Chapter I: Respect versus Relevance

10. The United Nations is respected by the public worldwide. In recent years, however, it has frequently had difficulty in translating that respect into support for its mission. This is despite the fact that most people in most countries still hold the Organization in considerable regard most of the time. Where opinion polls have been conducted, a majority of those interviewed declare general support for the Organization. Indeed in the United States, often thought to be home to the Organization's most persistent critics, more than 60 per cent of Americans when polled routinely express support for the Organization.

11. Although attitudes towards the UN are measured less frequently elsewhere, similar levels of support are visible. A poll taken simultaneously in Japan and the United States in early 1997 showed 71 per cent of Japanese and 69 per cent of Americans still believed that the UN was performing adequately. Among 38 countries polled by the UN's Department of Public Information (DPI) between 1989 and 1993, only in one country—a developing country, as it happens—were a narrow majority of respondents critical of the UN's performance. Elsewhere, friends were in the majority.

12. This is not surprising: the United Nations has been identified with some of the great issues of our time. From the drive to eliminate apartheid and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, to promotion of human rights and the advancement of women, the UN has articulated standards, provided forums for negotiation, and developed instruments for action.

13. Yet, respect has not translated into universal support. Indeed one main concern—and in our view, the explanation for the evident crisis of public support for the UN—is that it is seen, in many countries, as having come adrift from real issues. It is respected but not always viewed as relevant or effective. The United Nations growing distance from ordinary people, in the industrialized countries in particular, seems explicable at several levels. Region by region, there have been blows to the UN's operational reputation, many of them linked to the perceived inability of the Security Council, the most visible of the UN political bodies, to act decisively on major issues. So for example in Europe, the failure to protect the safe haven of Srebrenica and the handling of the Bosnian crisis more generally still weigh heavily on the UN. A poll in 1994 in Germany showed that 57 per cent of Germans, heavily influenced by the Bosnian experience, felt the UN was not able to deal effectively with world problems. Similarly in the United States, the memories of Somalia—however inaccurate—still loom large. Nonetheless, benign approval of the United Nations seems to grow back with time in the aftermath of such crises.

14. A more lasting difficulty is that in some countries the UN is not considered relevant to the issues people care most about. This is despite poll findings around the world that health, disaster relief, the environment, food security, human rights, crime and drugs score highly as issues that people understand must be addressed internationally. (A May 1997 poll of 16,000 respondents in the European Union (EU) asking what should be the EU's priorities delivered the following results: fighting crime (87%), fighting drugs (86%), fighting disease, including AIDS and cancer (86%), fighting unemployment (85%), protecting the environment (83%), defending human rights (81%)).

15. These <u>are</u> UN issues. UN agencies and programmes address each of them. Yet, in many countries, the UN's ownership of these issues is not acknowledged by public opinion. Equally, the UN is considered marginal to the everyday economic problems that also dominate poll results in developing and developed countries: people do not find effective operational solutions for job and income problems from the UN. In time, they begin to look elsewhere.

16. There is a lesson to be learned from those countries where the UN's relevance is not doubted, such as low-income countries where UN development activities are visible and important; or countries afflicted by or emerging from conflict where the UN's political, humanitarian, and reconstruction roles have been central. In these cases, we do not need polling data to know that the UN matters. People hold passionate views about the Organization and its relevance.

17. Beyond the circle of countries where effective UN programmes can be seen in operation, however, the UN is seen as a distant "talking shop" rather than an organization that can bring solutions that matter to "me"—me as an individual, my family, my community, my country. At a time of rapid, unsettling global change, the UN's agenda, while theoretically relevant, does not seem to unleash the action that people expect in order to reduce the sense of insecurity that has accompanied these changes. Its "resolutions" appear to have little impact on—sometimes, indeed, no relationship at all to—how individuals view change and seek to manage it. There is a particular irony in this disconnect, because the United Nations, in a de facto alliance with civil society, has played a large role in expanding public consciousness of global issues such as environmental change, gender equity, population and human rights—issues which <u>are</u> perceived as relevant to individual concerns.

18. This is a time characterized by the explosion of individual choice. Less than 10 years ago only a billion people lived in market-oriented societies, now 5 billion do; in 1974, 39 countries elected their national leaderships, today 117 do. Yet viewed from the perspectives of many individual citizens, the UN is not seen as playing a central role in the new equation. The effect of globalization has been to leave people in awe of the power of global economic trends and sceptical about the ability of their national authorities—much less multilateral institutions—to mitigate or manage those trends in a way that will protect individuals and

what they hold dear. In this context, the UN does not appear on people's screens as either part of the problem or part of the solution. The exception is an angry minority, particularly in the United States, who have unloaded on the UN their fear of a globalized future.

19. To the extent the UN does register, polls commissioned by the UN Department of Public Information in 1989-1993 in 38 countries showed that United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had more impact on public opinion than the Security Council, the General Assembly, or even at that time the Secretary-General. Today, it seems likely that agencies or programmes such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the Great Lakes and Bosnia or UNAIDS, in areas where it is actively marketing preventive health approaches, will have more reputational impact than the UN itself.

20. More generally, regional polling data suggests the UN's institutional reputation is often not free-standing but follows respect for national government and regional organizations. Where these are respected they provide "coat tails" that lift support for the more distant, less understood United Nations; where, as is often the case today, there is declining respect for government and regional institutions and their ability to mitigate the effect of global economic change, then, inevitably it weakens support for that shadowy, weak global layer of governance that lies behind national and regional institutions.

21. So at a time when the UN's unique international role and agenda, and the values it articulates, coincide with the concerns of people in both industrialized and developing countries, one might expect it to have a place at the cenrte of peoples' world view. In fact, the opposite has happened. Among many, there is respect and fondness for what the UN was set up to do, but little sense of current relevance. For a handful of critics it has become an emotional scapegoat for larger impersonal changes in their lives.

The UN's Advantages

22. Listing the UN's problems is easy—and popular. Nobody doubts the need to improve performance and effectiveness. Respect does not block public impatience for reform. An organization that is viewed as distant and not relevant to the problems and concerns of "me"—myself, my family, community and country—is one that is quickly tagged in the public's mind as a vast, unaccountable, ineffective bureaucracy. Further, no amount of good communications is going to lift this reputation unless there is seen to be major change in the Organization's performance. The reform programme is the threshold requirement for restoring public respect. Effective communications and organizational change are inseparable: communications will only be credible coming from a UN that is seen to have changed. Moreover, vigorous communications can promote that change—inside and outside the Organization.

23. That said, the UN has considerable natural assets in a world which is more integrated in terms of ideas, commerce, investment, and communications than at any time in history. First, the UN has one of the world's great mission statements, its Charter, a document that remains as contemporary today as it was when it was written more than 50 years ago. It remains a great rallying cry for common approaches to world issues. Second, the UN has the unique global capacity to frame issues, stimulate global debate about those issues, and forge a consensus around them.

24. Interest groups, opposition movements, religious leaders, social activists, policy makers, and peoples of all persuasions, ideologies, and causes beat their way to the UN's doors because it remains the great global launching-pad for big ideas, where governmental decision-makers pay attention. Whether at the world conferences in Beijing or Copenhagen, Cairo or Rio de Janeiro, the UN demonstrated its ability to draw global attention to an issue and see that it is debated by both government officials and representatives of civil society. While these conferences were criticized at the time by some for their apparent devotion to talk rather than action, they represent the culmination of decades-long processes which have effectively produced significant changes in perception and consciousness, leaving a lasting impact on the course of global policy-making. While the UN succeeded in introducing new norms into the global debate, it is often national actors who have brought these successes home to people in their own lives. So local champions take the credit in citizens' eyes, and the distant UN basks only in reflected glory.

25. The UN provides an extraordinary forum for debate and consensus building, together with a subsequent capacity to serve as an advocate for action and a framework for implementation of action on that new consensus. This is a unique and valuable role which belies the perception of a worthy but ineffectual talking shop. The UN has played this role on the environment, women's issues, social development and other issues with some effect. It is the world's communications agency. Whereas in many of its areas of operational activity it faces local, regional and international competitors who may have more resources, expertise and capacity, in its communications role the UN enjoys a unique stature.

26. The world is no longer as divided by competing agendas as it was. The polls cited earlier show that the old divide in which the "southern" UN agenda revolved around development issues such as poverty and debt while the "north" looked to the UN primarily on political matters is largely gone. While views on solutions may often differ, there is growing agreement on what the agenda should be. The agenda encompasses issues of development and conflict resolution, but stretches to include humanitarian issues, gender issues, population and environment among other matters. The priorities are being driven by the shared problems and concerns that individuals, families and communities are facing everywhere. These issues do not stop at national borders.

27. The UN's natural advantages occur at a moment of new opportunity: Two changes that are sweeping the world offer new reach to the UN's communications role. First, the

extraordinary rise of civil society offers new global and national networks of citizens for the UN to communicate with, and through. It is a time of explosive growth in both numbers and recognition of such organizations. As national governments have discovered, civil society provides scope for creative partnerships which the UN is well-placed to seize. Although there are different opinions on the ways and means of developing this relationship, the possibilities have expanded greatly in the last decade.

28. Second, there are equally significant changes taking place in the character of global information flows—some of which promote the opportunity for more effective UN communications and some of which place barriers in its way.

29. On the positive side, the volume of information being shared among societies and people has grown dramatically, whether it is the need of financial traders in Frankfurt, Shanghai, or Lima to access the same real-time global information services; individuals meeting across the Internet around shared interests; or the rise of global television services. We all know more about each other than ever before. Yet at the same time that information is flowing in new ways and responding to new patterns of demand, the mainstream press in many countries is covering less international news than at any point since the invention of the telegraph made possible timely coverage of overseas events.

30. The rise of customized information exchange via the Internet, talk radio, newsletters and other media, together with the power of modern mass culture to reach across societies, when traditional foreign news reporting by many national TV and press outlets is declining, takes us back to the principal theme of this report: information must relate meaningfully to the individual and his or her family or community.

31. Many newspaper and television editors have acknowledged a refocusing of foreign news away from stories about politics and governments to features about lifestyle, culture, and shared issues such as the environment or human rights. The global story still works when it is placed in a meaningful local context for the reader or viewer.

Getting Back to the People

32. A report sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations in the United States observed:

> "The United Nations should be intelligible to its varied constituencies. Voting publics must understand the United Nations if they are to support it. The vigorous and hazardous work of UN personnel in the field—in health care delivery, refugee work, peacekeeping, and development assistance—often is less visible than the political functions. The same is true of essential UN agencies that regulate maritime and aviation safety, allocate radio communications spectra, and undertake worldwide weather reporting to track hurricanes and disasters. The United Nations should overhaul its Department of Public Information and make information about UN

operations more accessible to the American press and public. A 'political unbundling' would allow church and evangelical groups, American corporations, environmental organizations, transportation safety groups, and other citizen associations to identify the UN operations that enhance their own international efforts."[1]

33. The UN's communications challenge is evident: putting itself and its programme back in touch with people; demonstrating that its agenda is their agenda. In Chapter III of this report, we lay out more fully how the UN might set about achieving this re-positioning. Here we will register certain overriding principles that must, in our view, drive this change:

a) *There is an over-used maxim in communications: think globally, act locally.* It endures, however, because it remains an important insight. The communications function of the UN must be organized around a strong central design that allows all activities to reinforce rather than contradict or weaken each other. At the same time that there is coordination of the global message and position together with much more effective central implementation capacity than in the past, there must also be a high degree of effective delegation to an empowered and effective country-level UN communications programme. This will allow the translation of global messages and campaigns into ones that are effective locally; that meet the challenge of relevance.

b) *Everybody must be a communicator.* If one of the core strengths of the UN is as a communications agency, then the communications function cannot be devolved solely to a single specialist department. Rather, the "communications culture" must infiltrate the work programme, job descriptions and responsibilities of all senior UN staff. Public diplomacy, as the communications function is now widely described, must be at the heart of the Organization's mission. Making the UN's case to the public must become a key and accepted part of official responsibilities. This emphasis on public diplomacy—making the wider case—must not stop at the door of the Secretariat. Ambassadors, agencies and programmes—that is, the broader UN family—must become full campaigners in this effort. In that sense, the communications department's role is as a facilitator, organizer and promoter for the UN's communications activities.

c) *The pre-eminent role of issues.* There must be a strategic determination to conduct overlapping, sequential campaigns on certain issues that have relevance to audiences across the world. These must not be vague abstracts but "wedge"

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[1] Council on Foreign Relations, ***The American National Interest and the United Nations***, New York, 1996, p.38

issues that are designed to force actions on the environment, poverty, drugs, employment, or other matters of concern to Member States. These communications campaigns would be tied to the General Assembly and must draw in the full UN system. On many issues, it is the agencies or programmes, not the Secretariat, which have more public credibility.

d) *The central role of the Secretary-General.* Concern has been expressed that the Secretary-General is being asked to undertake too many public activities, and that this is both over-stretching him and risking an over-personalization of the UN's reputation. However, the UN's Preparatory Commission 50 years ago pointed out that: "The Secretary-General, more than anyone else, will stand for the United Nations as a whole. In the eyes of the world, he must embody the principles and ideals of the UN Charter to which the Organization seeks to give effect."[2] Organizations in the modern media environment often are strongly associated with the public persona of the chief executive, and this can give clarity to a complex public image. There is, in addition, a growing group of other attractive and articulate UN leaders and spokesmen who should be fully utilized and developed.

e) *Placing the communications planning function with the General Assembly, and the Committee on Information, on an appropriate strategic level.* This must enable the Committee to direct the overall work programme by reviewing goals and campaign themes while not fragmenting the work programme with mandates that cannot be serviced with existing resources. The Committee might consider a single-mandate approach which lays out goals and priorities and then leaves management to determine how best to deploy resources to achieve those objectives. The Committee's strategic and directional role would also include evaluation of how well strategies are being implemented.

f) *There must be a flexibility to focus resources and efforts on priority targets at particular times.* Currently, that would include a strong issue-based effort to persuade United States public opinion, and the more sceptical United States political and policy elite, that the UN is deeply relevant to American concerns. Nevertheless, these efforts should be run within the overall communications strategy. In our opinion, progress will be driven primarily by strong implementation at the local and national levels of global UN campaigns and messages that demonstrate relevance, rather than through distinct and separate efforts.

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[2] Quoted in "The United Nations in its Second Half-Century: The Report of the Independent Working Group on the Future of the United Nations", a project of the Ford Foundation, 1995.

g) *The UN's institutional image must be addressed.* At the moment, the limited public understanding of the UN's role has reduced the strong positive attribute of a global communications agency to a negative—a "talking-shop" that does not get things done. The UN must delineate, in its communications, the two separate functions that give it its unique stature. First, it is a unique global forum for debate, reflection and ultimate consensus; second, through the Secretary-General, the Secretariat, the inter-governmental bodies, and other parts of the system, it is advocate and implementer of that consensus. An institutional image which reflects these two steps—debate followed by action—will be much stronger than the blurred, inconsistent image that has muddled present public understanding in many parts of the world.

Chapter II: Current Communications Arrangements in the UN Secretariat

34. Effective communications are the lifeblood of a complex modern organization. Understanding of its work, and the perception that this work is important and competently done, are especially critical for an organization like the United Nations, which depends on public funding and support. Not only its effectiveness but its very survival depends on being able to demonstrate to decision makers and their constituencies that it contributes in irreplaceable ways to goals that they cherish. Moreover, the Organization's ability to contribute in substantive terms to those goals also depends on its ability to communicate, for skill in communication is an essential attribute of leadership in organizations as in individuals. The United Nations ability to define issues, set policy agendas, and promote constructive solutions are a function of its ability to make the case for the value of its ideas and actions. Public diplomacy is at the heart of its mission.

35. The kind of communications that allows an organization to be effective in its substantive work as well as its constituency-building can be characterized as strategic communications. Much of the dissatisfaction with the current public information activities of the United Nations Secretariat appears to spring from the perception that they are not contributing as much as they should to the Organization's ability to lead, or to building support among its crucial constituencies. In other words, they are not strategic. This should come as no surprise.

36. Very few of the information activities of the UN Secretariat are designed to be strategic. They serve a very different—and very important—set of institutional functions: responding to the information needs of various constituencies (delegations, NGOs, media, educational institutions), carrying out the instructions of the General Assembly, creating and preserving the historical record of the Organization's work, facilitating public access to UN documents and records, publishing accounts of UN actions, creating channels for public participation in UN activities, and so forth. These form the substance of institutional communications.

37. The key difference between strategic and institutional communications is that the former proceeds from a fully developed sense of the direction in which the Organization wants to move opinion. Various communications techniques are then enlisted to that end. Strategic communications involve a process that begins with identifying the what (what is the vision of the United Nations role and objectives that is to be promoted?), the how (which vehicles such as press relations, public information and constituency-building are to be used in promoting this vision?), and the who (to whom are communications to be targeted; which NGOs, interest groups, parliamentarians, press organs, members of the policy community, elements of the general public?) of a concerted communications strategy. The guiding strategy is aimed at making the United Nations a more powerful and effective advocate for the programmes, policies and values its members seek to advance. Without such a strategy, institutional communications are likely to be fragmented, reactive, and to have little

cumulative impact on public opinion. Strategic communications aim not just to affect but to *mobilize public and specialist* opinion on behalf of the United Nations.

38. The observations in this chapter are based on a brief but close survey of the communications activities of the Secretariat, taking into account the Department of Public Information, the Office of the Spokesman of the Secretary-General (which is part of DPI but is distinct in its functions), the Speechwriting Unit, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for External Affairs.[3] This chapter will discuss these entities, including the relationships among them and the constraints on their activities. There are a number of other units within the Secretariat that have specialist responsibilities for public information: in the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and specific peacekeeping operations, for example. They are mentioned only in relation to the activities of the other four units or in the context of the overall framework of Secretariat communications.

39. In discussing the communications work of the Secretariat, it is important to keep in mind that the strongest impact on the public image of the United Nations is made by offices that are outside the remit of this Task Force: the public information arms of special funds or programmes such as UNICEF and UNHCR, and those of the specialized agencies such as the World Health Organization, or the World Trade Organization.

40. The general conclusion of this chapter has already been foreshadowed: that the United Nations Secretariat, much less the UN system as a whole, has no overarching communications strategy that can bolster its leadership capacity and its public support. None of the four communications entities has the task and the current capacity to devise and implement such a strategy. In order to emerge with a strong and positive voice in international policy debates, the United Nations must win and hold the confidence of political and civil-society leaders and their publics. The ability of the Organization to promote particular issues and approaches depends, therefore, on the quality and coherence of its message.

41. Strategic communication is more than the sum of its parts, which include public information, press relations and constituency-building. Above all, it is an intimate link in policy-making. The vision of the Organization's role and priorities that drives the communications effort must proceed from the top policy-making level and pervade the Organization comprehensively. In the meantime, however, the daily business of institutional communications must continue to provide information on the work of the Organization to the public and the UN's specialized constituencies.

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[3] The UN officials in charge of all four of these entities, and many members of their staffs, were extremely generous with their time and in assembling information for this chapter. Most of the observations here are based on the information supplied by these officials and their staffs.

The Department of Public Information

"The United Nations cannot achieve the purposes for which it has been created unless the peoples of the world are fully informed of its aims and activities." *from Resolution 13(I) of 13 February, 1946, Annex I*

42. The communications environment in which the United Nations operates today is very different from that of 1946, when the first session of the General Assembly established the Department of Public Information (DPI). Today, DPI remains the centrepiece and by far the largest implementer of institutional communications in the UN Secretariat. Its budget of about $71 million per year dwarfs that of the other units with communications responsibilities, as does its 861-member staff.[4]

43. DPI serves many masters. It is directed by and reports to both the Secretary-General and the General Assembly (through the Committee on Information, which was established in 1979). It serves the Secretariat, other agencies and programmes of the UN system, the delegations, certain regional organizations (such as the Organization of African Unity), the press, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and the general public. Each of these, not surprisingly, tends to feel that its requirements should be given highest priority, and to disparage DPI for not being more responsive to its particular needs.

44. DPI is the centre of the UN's institutional communications. Ironically, for a department charged with public information, DPI has not been effective at informing the public, or even other parts of the UN Secretariat, about what it does. The work of the Department and the constraints under which it operates are little understood. Nor are the considerable changes that the Department has undergone in the last several years.

45. Most notably, as members of the Task Force talked to journalists and other users of DPI services, such as diplomatic missions and NGOs, we found a central paradox. None of them seemed to feel well-served; every user felt short-changed when they compared the level of service they were getting to what they would expect from an 861-person department with a $71 million annual budget. And they imagined it was because others were getting a quality of service denied to them. On DPI's side, there was not a single service or unit whose staff did not consider it under-resourced. Many offices felt they no longer had the resources to get the job done; all felt they lacked the financial means to deliver an effective programme.

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[4] The budget figures cited here and throughout are, unless otherwise noted, taken from the Programme and budget for the biennium 1996-97, Part VII, Section 25.

46. The truth seems to be that DPI's resources are so dispersed (for example, 35 per cent of budget and 44 per cent of posts go into 61 UNICs, each of which individually seems to be under-resourced) and its work programme so driven by multiple mandates given it by Governments that there is not the critical mass of effort around key priorities that would satisfy any one of DPI's constituencies that it was getting an adequate depth of service.

What DPI Does

47. The Department is organized into six major units. These include the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General; three divisions (Media, Library and Publications, and Promotion and Public Services), each comprising a number of services and sections; and one free-standing service, the Information Centres Service. In addition, the Office of the Spokesman of the Secretary-General is attached to DPI. It is discussed in a different section below, however, as it functions quite separately from the rest of the Department.

48. The Department of Public Information had a budget of approximately $143 million for the 1996-1997 biennium, including nearly $5 million in extra-budgetary resources and about $2 million for the Spokesman's Office. Thus, the DPI budget represents about 5.5 per cent of the regular budget for the "core" United Nations (meaning the Secretariat, the five regional Commissions, and the Secretariat offices in Geneva, Vienna, and Nairobi). Its staff of 861, 10 of whom are attached to the Spokesman's Office, makes up 8.5 per cent of the core UN staff of 10,021.

The Media Division

49. With 25 per cent of the DPI budget and 17 per cent of its staff, the Media Division provides services to the media that cover the UN, such as press accreditation, written summaries of the proceedings of official meetings, film footage (including live satellite and cable feeds) of meetings and events for use by television broadcasters, current and archival photographs, and daily digests of events at the UN. Broadcasters may also subscribe to video packages of daily highlights. The AP, Reuters, Worldwide TV News and CNN are among the subscribers. The income from sales of television news coverage amounts to about $700,000 in this biennium, but does not cover costs.

50. The Media Division also produces finished products for radio and television broadcast. Television products include:

- "Questions and answers about the UN": 30-second spots;
- "UN Minutes": 60-second spots on moments of UN history;
- "UN in Action": 3-minute mini-features on the work of the UN and the specialized agencies around the world. About 60 segments are produced annually. Available by subscription, they reach an estimated audience of 200 million a week, and are regularly included in the CNN World Report;

- "Year in Review": a 15-minute programme produced annually showing highlights of the Organization's activities and major events;
- "World Chronicle": a 30-minute weekly talk-show in which UN officials and other experts are interviewed by a panel of journalists.

51. In addition, over 100 films and videos are currently in active distribution, of which at least 21 have won film-festival prizes. Some cover UN activities (The Earth Summit, peacekeeping operations, disarmament in Iraq), while others cover subjects of concern to the UN—the decolonization of Namibia and Zimbabwe, landmines and the Central American peace process are examples. Still others are part of the observance of particular UN days, years, or decades. Some films generate substantial revenue.

52. Radio programmes are made in the six official UN languages and nine others. Programming is roughly 40 per cent news and 60 per cent feature material. Most of the production is in the form of taped programmes, which are mailed to broadcasters. This means of delivery is highly problematic, resulting in the late arrival of many programmes, some of which are outdated by the time they are received. A proposal is being developed for a direct broadcast service, which would obviate delivery problems. Already there is more direct broadcasting through telephone and digital lines, and attempts are being made to make fuller use of the Internet. An audio news service is available by telephone 24 hours a day, but a recent evaluation suggested that it was used more by delegations and NGOs than the press.

53. Programming in recent years has been refocused on peacekeeping operations, especially when a new operation is launched in a hostile environment. About 15 radio service staff have been assigned to peacekeeping operations at various times—a Portuguese-language broadcaster to UNAVEM III, for example.

Library and Publications Division

54. This Division runs the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and produces a number of Secretariat publications such as the quarterlies UN Chronicle and Africa Recovery, the UN Yearbook, and the Blue Book series. It includes the sales and marketing section, and has been assigned (by the Assistant Secretary-General of DPI, in whose office overall coordination of information technology resides) the lead implementing role in the Department's remarkably rapid and successful adoption of advanced information technology, including its presence on the world wide web. (The widely praised UN Home Page is now registering close to 4 million "hits" per month.) The Division accounts for 23 per cent of the DPI budget and 24 per cent of its staff.

55. The Library is mandated to acquire and maintain a complete collection of all UN documents and publications issued in any language anywhere in the world, to provide complete bibliographic access to them, and to maintain a global network of depository

libraries. It is also required to keep a collection of non-UN publications that are relevant to the Organization's work, and to help the Secretariat staff, delegates and permanent missions obtain the information they need in the course of their work. The Library has made great strides in digitalizing the vast quantity of documentation generated by the UN, and in making it widely available in electronic form.

56. In addition to the periodicals and books mentioned above, the Publications Service regularly produces eight other publications. One of them, the twice-monthly Development Business, more than meets its operational costs through subscription to its printed and on-line versions. Others include the Annual Report of the Secretary-General, Basic Facts About the United Nations, and UN in Brief. The Service includes a design section which serves all Secretariat publications, an editorial section, and a production and coordination section which coordinates production for all print products in the Secretariat.

57. The Division has also responded to in-house demand for Internet training, offering instruction to over 1,000 people from the missions and the Secretariat so far.

Promotion and Public Services Division

58. This Division responds to a number of General Assembly/Committee on Information mandates to promote the work of the United Nations around particular themes, events and observances, such as the major world conferences on environment, population, women, social development, and so forth. It sees itself as the "think tank" of DPI, planning campaigns to incorporate special events and particular constituencies into the overall public information programme of the UN.

59. The Division also organizes the direct contact between the United Nations and members of the general public, through tours (for the more than 1 million visitors to UN Headquarters each year, only half of whom take the tour because capacity is limited by security concerns), exhibits, and responses to 90,000 public inquiries per year.

60. Public Liaison includes an NGO liaison service for 1,500 NGOs accredited to DPI, which gives these organizations access to information about UN activities and a channel for participation in some of them. There are weekly briefings for NGOs, and an annual conference at Headquarters.

61. Recently, the Division has been given responsibility for responding to misinformation about the United Nations, publishing quick and timely fact sheets that correct common misperceptions.

62. The Promotion and Public Services Division also acts as the secretariat to the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), which brings together officials responsible

for public information throughout the UN system so that they can coordinate their efforts. The budget of the Division accounts for 8 per cent of DPI funds and 6 per cent of its staff.

Information Centres Service and the UNICs

63. The Information Centres Service coordinates, administers and services the network of UN Secretariat information centres and services outside New York. The 61 UN Information Centres (UNICs) in as many countries, and the UN information services in Geneva and Vienna, together account for 35 per cent of the information budget, and 44 per cent of posts. Central support for the UNICs, provided by the Information Centres Service, accounts for an additional 3 per cent of DPI's budget and another 3 per cent of its staff.

64. The UNICs are the local conduit for information from and about the United Nations. They organize press conferences, seminars, exhibits, and other events to promote UN reports, conferences or observances. They adapt UN information materials into local languages.

65. In some cases, the UNICs work with local media outlets to advance the understanding of UN programmes and positions, especially on matters of regional or local interest. Some are able to produce press releases and other materials in local languages for use by the press and the general public. Many maintain reference libraries, including audio-visual resources, and facilitate model-UN programmes. Most maintain liaison with local non-governmental associations, including UN Associations. In information, one size does not fit all, so the UNICs have the task of tailoring and targeting information as appropriate in their particular setting.

66. In addition to disseminating UN information, the UNICs provide feedback to UN Headquarters on national and regional trends, and on local media coverage of the UN. Many UNICs will handle logistical arrangements and media liaison for senior UN officials during local visits. They may be called upon to perform representational duties, or even such services as inspecting airplanes for compliance with UN embargoes.

67. The number of field information offices has grown while the resources for them have not. Since the late 1980s, nearly half of the UNICs have been integrated into the office of the UN Resident Coordinator (usually but not always the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative), in the name of efficiency and for the sake of presenting a unified image of the UN system. Substantial problems have arisen as a result. In some centres, DPI reports that information activities have dropped off alarmingly. Nor have the expected cost savings necessarily materialized, as the UNIC component pays a smaller share of a larger total for facilities that may not suit its purposes.

68. The problems of integration have proved difficult to correct. DPI has no part in evaluating the performance of UN Resident Coordinators who have UNIC responsibilities,

and some Coordinators are unresponsive to DPI requests and programming. A joint DPI/UNDP working group and other efforts have not resolved the problems so far.

Constraints on Effective Public Information Activities

69. There are a number of specific constraints on DPI activities, which fall into three categories: those imposed by Member States, those resulting from resource levels, and those that flow from the bureaucratic practices and procedures of the Secretariat.

Constraints imposed by Member States

70. Servicing the multiple users of information about the United Nations in response to the specific instructions of the Committee on Information makes heavy demands on the staff and budget of DPI. Although the resolution establishing the Department assigns responsibility for the formulation and execution of information policy to the Secretary-General, "subject to the general authority of the principal organs of the United Nations", the Committee on Information has in many ways replaced the Secretary-General's role by approving many detailed mandates for the Department.

71. Currently, DPI labours under more than 350 General Assembly/Committee on Information mandates, many of which tell the Department not only what to do but how, in very specific terms, to do it. More than half of the forty-ninth (1994) General Assembly's resolutions containing requests for public information services asked for specific services or products, rather than specifying an objective and letting DPI managers judge the best way of accomplishing it.

72. Since few of these mandates have "sunset" provisions, their accumulated weight deprives the Department of flexibility and responsiveness. For example, about one-third of the mandates adopted at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly (1989), while not restated since, are still current. DPI is currently responsible for the mandated observance of 21 international days and weeks, 13 decades and 5 international years. In 1995, it was instructed to publicize a total of 65 conferences and observances. Some progress has been made through negotiations between the Committee and the Department to streamline some of the mandates. But much more needs to be done to ease the burden of micro-management.

Resource constraints

73. DPI has learned to do more with less in recent years, largely through the creative application of new technology. The staff of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, for example, has been reduced from 148 in 1986 to 121 for the 1998-1999 biennium, while the services offered have expanded. As another example, the Exhibits office introduced new design, reproduction and mounting techniques, which reduced the cost of producing exhibits by one-half to three-quarters. Adoption of new light-weight materials greatly reduced the cost of

shipping for travelling exhibits. The Publications Service has adopted uniform desk-top publishing facilities and is using much more in-house printing, both of which result in cost-saving efficiency. Numerous other examples of saving money without sacrificing function (and indeed enhancing function) could be offered.

74. Many of the sections and services within DPI are truly lean, and some are now beginning to find their operations inhibited by lack of resources. Several language editions of the UN Chronicle have been suspended for lack of funds; publication of the acclaimed Blue Book series has been suspended (with the manuscript on Yugoslavia complete but unpublished) because the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has asked that a specific mandate for it be sought from the General Assembly); new workstations are needed in the Library to meet the demand for access to certain data bases; the modernization of the radio service is limited by lack of funds and the freeze on posts. Meetings coverage in the form of press releases is threatened by the lack of funds for temporary assistance, as most of the reportage is done by part-timers. Throughout the Department, upgrades of computer equipment will be needed in the near future, and is already overdue in some cases. In general, however, the lack of flexibility in using available resources was more often cited as a problem than the lack of resources per se.

Constraints imposed by UN procedures

75. The greatest frustration expressed by DPI managers in the research for this chapter was not with resource constraints but with the constraints on their ability to deploy existing resources sensibly. These constraints are imposed by the rigidities and inefficiencies of the UN personnel system, the procurement system and the budget process. These problems are not unique to DPI, but the fast-moving nature of technological change in the information field makes them particularly damaging.

76. The personnel system throws up two kinds of obstacles to efficient management of resources. One is the "last in-first out" system of contracts, in which newly created positions often tend initially to be filled only on the basis of very short-term contracts (as little as three months). In DPI, the newly created positions tend to be the technology-related ones, in which the relevant skills are scarce and in high demand. The inability to offer even short-term job security and reasonable career development prospects makes it difficult to hire good people with these sought-after skills. For example, it has proved difficult to keep qualified staff on the highly acclaimed, externally funded "Cyber Schoolbus" educational project for this reason.

77. Secondly, junior professional (P1/P2) posts in the UN are filled only by competitive exam, and it is impossible for a manager to specify precisely what skills are needed in his/her division. For example, the librarian exam is now only being offered in China, Republic of Korea, Germany and Japan, but the Dag Hammarskjöld Library is in a process of technological transformation that requires very advanced English language skills. The fact

that three of the four countries from which new junior librarians may be hired do not even use roman script illustrates the poor fit between needs and bureaucratic requirements.

78. Rigidities in the personnel process often prevent managers from hiring the kind of person they think best qualified for the job at more senior levels as well. For example, DPI managers felt it was important to have an editor with a deep knowledge of the continent for the highly regarded quarterly Africa Recovery, but came under serious pressure to make a decision based not on these attributes but on a candidate's place in the queue for promotion.

79. The extreme slowness and inefficiency of UN procurement have kept services such as publications, marketing and library user services waiting for months for equipment that would allow them to do more and better work with the same or fewer people, in less time. Even after funds have been appropriated and assigned, the wait continues, punctuated by repeated demands to justify the acquisition of the already-approved equipment. Managers often feel that they could buy what they need off the shelf, instantly, for less money. Many of the computers are more than five years old, during which time technology has progressed by leaps and bounds. Investments are not made that could literally pay for themselves, such as just-in-time printing technology which can obviate the need to maintain large inventories of publications or documents (thereby saving both paper and storage costs). Slow procurement runs the risk that what is acquired will be out of date before it is installed.

80. The rigidity of budgeting practices prevents managers from shifting resources (human or financial) from areas where needs have declined (often owing to improvements in efficiency) to tasks that could put more resources to productive use. In addition, revenue generation is completely divorced from investment. Services that could pay for themselves cannot borrow against future revenues, or even use money they earn to expand revenue-generating activities, because all earned income goes into the general account. This results in real absurdities, like the sales section being unable to fill a large rush order because it had no money to pay overtime, even though the resulting sales would more than cover the cost of the extra labour.

81. The balance of needs for personnel, programmes, and equipment may shift dramatically within a biennium. Salaries and staff costs consume about 76 per cent of the DPI budget in the 1996-1997 biennium. In some services, so little money is available for supplies and equipment, travel, or general operating expenses that staff are less than fully occupied. Photographers cannot go out into the field to take pictures of UN programmes, camera operators lack film reels, cartographers lack computer hardware. Yet it is impossible to reprogramme funds allocated for underutilized posts to pay for other, more pressing needs.

Other Offices with Communications Responsibilities

The Office of the Spokesman of the Secretary-General

82. The Spokesman's Office is the UN Secretariat's main interface with the working press, and its primary focus is the daily news cycle. While DPI, and in particular its Media Division, also provides services to the news media, such as meetings summaries (in the form of press releases), press kits for major conferences and other outreach activities, most journalists do not regard it as a news resource. They may use documents for background purposes, but most material arrives too late to be useful in covering breaking news. The exception is the audio and video tape coverage of events and meetings in New York and Geneva, which many broadcasters find useful, although they say that it is overly bureaucratic. It is the Spokesman's Office, however, that speaks to the press on behalf of the Secretary-General about newsworthy events in the Secretariat and those elsewhere on which he wishes to comment.

83. The Spokesman briefs the press and the delegations daily, on the record, and responds to press inquiries throughout the day. The Office is said to have become much more news-oriented in the past three years, and to have better access to information within the Secretariat . The staff is now more systematically deployed to keep up with events in the departments most likely to make news (Peacekeeping, Political Affairs and Humanitarian Affairs). It is severely handicapped, however, by a shortage of staff, which makes it impossible for the Office to respond to many press inquiries in a timely fashion or to search out information from the substantive departments in order to give informed answers.

84. The number of posts (six professionals and four general service staff) assigned to the Spokesman's Office is not adequate to staff a serious news operation, and a number of the posts have been vacant for several months, including that of Deputy Spokesman. Since the Spokesman routinely (and appropriately) travels with the Secretary-General, the Office is often down to only two professionals if the Spokesman is travelling and another officer is in a meeting, sick, or on leave. This is a source of considerable frustration to the media, especially those who are based at the UN, and often means that the Organization's views and positions simply go unreported.

85. The Spokesman's Office has a budget that amounts to about 1.4 per cent of the DPI budget and has 1.2 per cent of its staff. Although it is administratively part of DPI, the Office has little contact with the rest of the Department in the course of its daily work. There is minimal coordination between them, in large part because their responsibilities are not seen to overlap.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for External Affairs

86. The Assistant Secretary-General for External Affairs serves as a focal point for outreach to civil society. The emphasis that her office places on the host country, the United States, is presumably imposed by funding and staffing constraints as well as perceived needs. The Office has only four staff and is part of the Office of the Secretary-General. Separate figures on its budget were not available.

87. This Office is the newest of the communications entities within the Secretariat and sees its task as mobilizing support for the United Nations among major organs of civil society such as labour unions, business and professional associations, academic institutions, foundations, private voluntary organizations and such, reaching beyond the traditional NGO constituencies of the United Nations. And it is proactive, seeking opportunities to boost the image of the United Nations before important audiences.

88. The Office puts a great deal of emphasis on the direct spokesmanship of the Secretary-General himself. The Assistant Secretary-General therefore has an input in scheduling his appearances, working with the Spokesman's Office to vet media interviews. She also works with the speech-writer's office on depth, coherence, and continuity in the message communicated through the Secretary-General's public appearances.

89. Caution was expressed elsewhere about focusing too heavily on the Secretary-General, putting the man ahead of the message or even the policy. The Assistant Secretary-General for External Affairs would like to see other senior UN officials actively represent the UN to the public, while admitting that at this point in the new UN administration most groups are only interested in having the Secretary-General himself. Thus, a major constraint on the activity of this Office is the limited time of the principal and the heavy demands on him from other official duties. Currently, some 90 per cent of the invitations that come to him must be turned down.

The Speechwriting Unit

90. The Speechwriting Unit is staffed by three English-language speech-writers and two who write in French. All of the Secretary-General's scripted public statements pass through this office. It works with the Chief of Staff, the Spokesman's Office, and the substantive departments to develop the Secretary-General's statements.

91. The lack of a coherent strategy for communications, and even for the use of the Secretary-General's time, is felt to be a constraint on the effectiveness of the Speechwriting Unit. The ad hoc decision-making of the moment involves too many contending voices giving different advice, overtaxing the Secretary-General's time and generating little cumulative impact. However, it is felt that some consistent themes are beginning to emerge across speeches, such as the need for reform, an emphasis on civil society, the relationship

between development and the private sector, and the challenge of new, transnational issues such as the environment and ethnic conflict. Currently, coordination falls to the Chief of Staff. The heavy demands on that position, however, are not compatible with the role of chief communications coordinator.

Conclusion

92. This review of existing communications arrangements in the Secretariat suggested a number of issues that the Task Force felt must be addressed in the reorientation of public information activities. First and foremost is the need for overall direction and coordination of a unified communications strategy. Second, the tools for implementing such a strategy include a greatly strengthened news operation in the Secretariat, with a proactive media team helping to achieve a higher profile and more positive image for the United Nations in the news media. Thirdly, more active, strategic management of the UN's relations with its actual and potential constituencies in civil society is required. A fourth is the question of achieving coherence in a more decentralized communications operation. A fifth issue is the delivery of the UN's message at the country level. The in-country information operations of the UN currently appear inadequate to carry a communications strategy built around a strong, credible local voice. Finally, the Task Force recognized that the reorientation of communications is not a task for the communications staff alone, but requires building a "communications culture" throughout the Organization. The recommendations that follow are intended to address these issues in a manner that is at once far-reaching and practical.

Chapter III: A New UN Communications Structure

93. The following proposals for change in the structure and orientation of communications within the UN Secretariat are designed to strengthen UN leadership and to mobilize political support for the Organization. Clear and forceful explanation of the UN's role in problem-solving and its position on issues is one of the central goals in this new structure. More effective outreach to the policy community, the UN's special constituencies (such as the news media, NGOs and academic institutions) and the general public is a primary vehicle for achieving this goal. The structural outcome of these changes will be a strong, global strategic communications capacity linked to a reinvigorated country delivery capability.

94. Effective communications are central to successful policy-making. For this reason, the senior official in charge of communications should be part of the Secretary-General's innermost policy-making circle and of the policy-consolidation groups established by the wider reform process. By the same logic, the budget of the Department should not be considered merely an administrative cost but should be classified as programme.

95. The challenge for communications in the UN context is to combine the capacity to think strategically at the global level, and then to deliver at the local and regional levels a customized implementation, well rooted in local priorities and concerns but still consistent with the global strategy. With the integration of UN field offices and, one hopes, with a new emphasis on the importance of communications coming to pervade all UN departments and programmes, country-level communications strategies should be understood as a central responsibility of UN resident coordinators everywhere.

96. The Task Force has avoided constructing a very detailed management blueprint, not wanting to succumb to the temptation we criticize elsewhere of micro-management by committee. We do believe, however, that we are recommending a dramatic departure from current information policy, with a clear new direction and design; in our view, endorsement of this report by the Secretary-General and member Governments will empower the leadership of the new Department to implement radical change. The elaboration of a new implementing structure should be the first task of the head of the new Communications Department, since it is obvious that these recommendations raise important questions of staffing, budget and the range of communications activities to be undertaken by the United Nations.

97. The Task Force believes that it is essential that the United Nations invest in building a substantial communications capacity; the ability to communicate ideas to a global audience is the Organization's major comparative advantage. We are aware, however, that priorities must be set, and that in a climate of financial stringency these priorities must be clear and focused on the Organization's goals. Some difficult choices will have to be made; some functions consolidated, streamlined, or eliminated. We are of the general opinion, however,

that budget cuts in communications have gone far enough. The budgetary implication of our strong conviction that communications should be re-designated as a front-line programme rather than a support service is that, should any further cuts be decided by Governments, they should be commensurate with those applied to other substantive departments rather than with the deeper cuts envisaged for "administrative" services.

98. The Task Force's review of existing communications arrangements did not constitute a performance review. It did suggest at least three points that have implications for the way that restructuring is carried out.

a) The Task Force was struck by the number of motivated, hard-working and innovative people working in public information at the UN, from the Assistant Secretary-General on down, who are full of ideas about how to communicate more effectively but are inhibited by the lack of an enabling structure that would channel their energies more productively.

b) We observed that the ratio of staff costs to operating funds (76 per cent versus 24 per cent in DPI) is too high, resulting in under-use of human resources and limited programme impact. Getting this ratio down should be a priority of reorientation.

c) The kinds of new skills that are needed to meet the demands of a modern communications strategy (not just in information technology, which should remain a strong priority, but also in press relations, marketing and advocacy) cannot be met solely through redeployment and retraining. The conditions for professional upgrading and some turnover in staff need to be analyzed. While personnel reform is not part of our mandate, the members of the Task Force urge that the chief of communications and his or her line managers (who themselves should have the appropriate background in communications) be given the authority, within budgetary constraints, to hire people with essential skills and redeploy existing staff within the UN as needed.

99. The Task Force concluded that the major areas of weakness in the current information structure at the UN are not so much in the current structure and functioning of the Department of Public Information, but rather in:

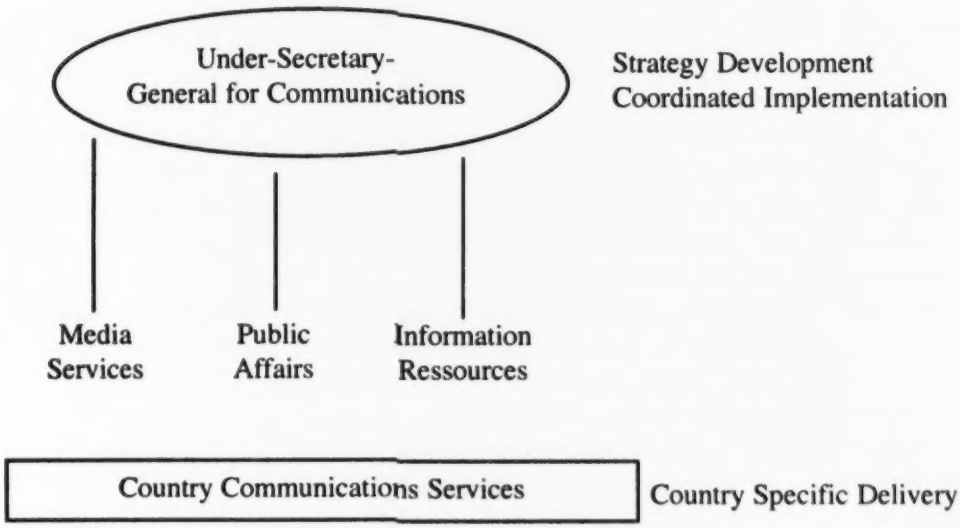
a) the lack of an overall communications strategy, aggravated in recent years by a proliferation of offices and appointments dealing with communications. The result has been uncoordinated and untargeted efforts whose impact is less than the money and energy spent on them—even though the quality of such efforts may be high;

b) the lack of focused and capable mechanisms for implementation;

c) the lack of effective delivery of the communications programme at the country level.

100. New information technology and a new management structure, as proposed here, should allow a communications programme that is at once more coordinated and more

decentralized. The major changes from the existing communications arrangement should come at the top, with line management and policy-making authority vested in a senior official, and at the field level, with a streamlined and strengthened network of UN Communications Services. In addition, headquarters communications activities need to be rationalized.



101. In brief, the Task Force recommends that the existing communications entities (Spokesman's Office, Speechwriting, External Affairs and DPI) be unified in a Department of Communications. We feel that the level of experience and authority required to carry out the responsibilities proposed in this report for the head of the Department are commensurate with—and indeed call for—the rank of Under-Secretary-General. The Under-Secretary-General for Communications (USG/C) would exercise the central function of strategic planning and coordination of communications. He or she would oversee three additional major functions at UN Headquarters as well as the UN Communications Services in the field. The three main functions beyond development of strategy and field delivery foreseen by the Task Force are:

- Media Services
- Public Affairs
- Information Resources

The Under-Secretary-General for Communications

102. The Under-Secretary-General for Communications (USG/C) will be the principal strategist for UN communications policy as well as the administrator of the communications functions and services. This official and his or her colleagues will generate and craft the

messages emanating from the Organization in collaboration with the Secretary-General and his most senior colleagues, working within the general oversight of the Committee on Information. Further, he or she will oversee the planning and delivery of the UN's messages in a coordinated fashion through all the instruments in the Department's repertory: media relations, direct contact with the public, inputs to educational programmes, contacts with organs of civil society, appearances by the Secretary-General and other UN officials, publications, special events, and so forth. The impact of this office should be felt in three directions: amplifying the voice of the United Nations on major policy issues within its mandate (advocacy and consensus-building), strengthening the reputation of the United Nations and thereby raising its political support (image), and increasing efficiency in meeting the UN-related information needs of both internal and external constituencies (institutional communications).

103. The USG/C's office would be the central nervous system of the new communications system, working closely with the substantive departments of the Secretariat as well as coordinating efforts with other programmes, funds and specialized agencies of the UN system. As the country-based programmes of UN organizations provide the most powerful evidence of the Organization's effectiveness, the Department of Communications should lead the way in revitalizing or replacing the Joint UN Information Committee (JUNIC) so that organizations of the UN system will have an effective way of coordinating their communications campaigns on subjects of common concern.

104. We propose that the office of the USG house the support system for the UN Communications Services in the field (the successors to the UNICs), so that the implementation of communications strategy can be more effectively decentralized, and information from the field services have a more direct feed into communications planning.

105. The office of the USG should take direct responsibility for the Department's liaison with the General Assembly, and this should be a priority for the head of communications. He or she will work closely with the Committee on Information with the goal of effecting a transition to strategic direction by that Committee. This would allow it to focus on establishing major communications goals and strategies for the forthcoming programming period. Responsibility for implementation should rest with the Department of Communications, with the appropriate Committee oversight and review. The Secretary-General will need to ask the General Assembly/Committee on Information to review the whole body of DPI mandates, and establish a new framework for them.

106. The Department of Communications would naturally be in charge of programming, budgeting and evaluation of the Department's activities, although we recommend that line managers be given a great deal more autonomy in the allocation of funds and personnel in carrying out their tasks and delivering services. We also recommend an early and wide-ranging review of existing communications services and outputs to evaluate their relevance to the new orientation and goals of the UN's strategic communications.

107. An important function of the USG's office should be to oversee the adoption of new information technology throughout the Department and in the UN Communications Services, to ensure that maximum advantage is being taken of new forms of communication. It should work with the central UN budget, procurement, personnel and administrative offices to allocate resources in a way that is responsive to opportunities and efficiencies made possible by new technology. One of the opportunities which must be seized is to link the geographically dispersed communications offices in the field into a coherent vehicle for country-level implementation of the UN's communications strategy.

108. The USG for Communications should also form a small strategy group in his or her office, where the tactics for implementing communications strategy are worked out, advocacy campaigns are planned and responses to misinformation about or criticism of the UN are devised. A serious and sustained effort needs to be mounted to instil a "communications culture" throughout the Secretariat and the intergovernmental bodies of the UN.

Media Services

109. The mass media shape opinion and often influence policy on virtually every subject on the agenda of the United Nations. In the industrialized countries in particular, policy-makers and their constituents form their views of the Organization and its leaders in part on the basis of the news and commentary that they read in the press, hear on radio, see on television, or, increasingly, search out on the Internet.

110. An organization without an activist media strategy simply allows other actors to take the initiative in determining how an event or situation will be portrayed and interpreted. Furthermore, the impressions that emerge in daily news coverage and commentary are part of a cumulative process; over time, the process establishes a conventional wisdom about the competence and capabilities of organizations and individuals. An agency (or an office-holder) whose role is ignored or is consistently portrayed in a negative light is likely to see its support and its impact on events diminish. Beyond the direct impact on the institution itself, and perhaps of greater importance, a proactive media strategy allows the political leadership of an institution to shape the agenda of public debate: not only to make news but to alter the definition of what is news.

111. The Task Force recommends that one of the major functions of the new Department of Communications be a strongly news-oriented delivery of media services. Its role would be to tell the UN's story with accurate and timely information, and make clear the significance of the UN's role and actions. In particular, when the UN is an important actor in a breaking news story, it is important that the news media are given an accurate picture of what goal or course of action the Organization is trying to promote and why. This means that the media services will not only respond to requests for information from the press, but will facilitate

reporting from the UN, promote stories, gain a forum for UN spokesmen, correct misinformation about the Organization's role, and make sure that the UN's view is heard amid the competing interpretations of events. In general, the maintenance of a multilingual capacity is seen as central to the effective delivery of media services.

112. The Office of the Spokesman of the Secretary-General is currently the most consistent originator of news from the UN Secretariat. There is, however, little synergy between this office and the other media services in DPI, such as television news. The Spokesman's Office should function as the hub of an integrated news system where all media services are pulling in the same direction. The Spokesman is the main news-flow manager in contact with the UN press corps and other news outlets, but his hour-to-hour responsibility for information gathering and dissemination may not leave adequate time for administration and coordination of other media services. In addition, the Spokesman should travel with the Secretary-General and therefore be away from Headquarters more often than good management would dictate. Therefore the Task Force does not recommend that the Spokesman necessarily be the director of the media services.

113. The Spokesman's Office should be strengthened to equip it more systematically to collect newsworthy information from Secretariat departments in New York and from UN operations in the field, develop this into assertive briefing materials on a daily basis, actively disseminate these materials to news media, and respond to press inquiries in a timely fashion. The Spokesman should work closely with the Secretary-General and the USG/Communications to develop messages and identify stories about which the news media should be made aware. Part of the purpose of this effort is to expand the UN "story", so that economic and social issues are firmly placed on the news agenda alongside political issues and Security Council affairs.

114. The global news media today operate on a non-stop, 24-hour news cycle. Neither the consumers nor the sources of news from the United Nations are exclusively New York-based; thus a noon briefing in New York cannot be optimal for the whole range of worldwide media deadlines. News from, for example, a peacekeeping operation in Asia or Europe or a human-rights monitoring project in Africa may be stale before it is presented at the noon briefing in New York's time zone, and certainly will be old by the time it is recycled for the next thrice-weekly briefing at the UN Information Service in Geneva. While the UN correspondents based at UN Headquarters remain a priority of the Spokesman's Office, greater effort should be made to reach media outlets that do not base correspondents there. We suggest that the Office develop a much closer working relationship with the UN Information Service in Geneva, such that UNIS/G briefs reporters every morning (local time), concentrating on news from UN operations in Eurasia and Africa, as well as from the UN offices in Geneva. As the structure of UN communications services in the field is reinforced, the flow of information from them into the Spokesman's Office or UNIS/G should increase substantially. If the UNIS in Geneva is to play a more active role, some modest augmentation of its news-gathering resources will also be needed.

115. The Spokesman's Office has made important strides towards establishing a structure that taps the newsmaking potential of the substantive departments in the Secretariat. Staff members from the Office are assigned to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Humanitarian Affairs and Department of Political Affairs, and are permitted to sit in their morning staff meetings; each department also has a staff member who is supposed to report newsworthy events to the Spokesman. This structure, however, needs to be strengthened substantially, and to include economic and social issues more systematically. Each Secretariat department must understand that a major element of its responsibility is to feed information into the Communications Department on a daily basis, and that this public diplomacy task is essential for building global consent for substantive actions the departments carry out. The Spokesman's side of the departmental liaison structure is so understaffed that it cannot function as intended. Coordination with peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in the field, many of which have their own information personnel, also needs reinforcement.

116. Direct access to the Secretary-General is one of the keys to the Spokesman's credibility with the press. Neither the USG for Communications nor the head of media services should be an intervening layer between the two. The Spokesman should continue to attend the Secretary-General's morning meeting and travel with him.

117. In addition to the Spokesman's Office, the Task Force suggests that media services should incorporate and sharpen the tasks of the news-related elements of the current DPI Media Division: UNTV news services, television news programmes such as UN in Action and World Chronicle, the radio service, photo unit, the media accreditation service and the meetings coverage section. It can be argued that the latter should be part of the Conference Services, but it was feared that press releases giving summaries of major events and meetings at UN Headquarters would not be produced quickly enough to be useful even as background to the news media if this function was moved out of the Communications Department. All media services should be reoriented towards real-time news cycles, producing the raw material for news and feature stories in which the UN is a player or is advocating a particular policy. The radio service especially needs modernization, with a focus on live and direct broadcasts from UN Headquarters and UN operations in the field.

118. The Task Force recommends that UN media services develop a much stronger and more sophisticated visual sense. Current television and photo set-ups are outmoded and unattractive, and very often inconvenient for the media. A concerted effort needs to be made to project a dynamic and modern visual image of the Organization. Part of this effort will extend to the Spokesman's Office, which needs to be able to place telegenic spokesmen with well-developed camera skills in front of the news cameras.

119. Much news about the UN comes from the field. Particularly in remote or difficult locations, reporters often depend on UN operations for logistical and other assistance. For

the more cumbersome mechanics of television reporting, the needs are even greater. UN media services may be able to secure coverage of a situation that the Secretary-General wishes to highlight by helping to get television crews to the site, organizing pool coverage, securing a satellite uplink, and so forth.

120. Throughout the Media Services Division, the Task Force believes that emphasis should be placed on providing the raw material for news coverage of the United Nations and its priorities, rather than on preparing news products itself. While there are instances when the UN should produce its own programming (in the context of an advocacy campaign, for example, or of general development information), they will be the exception rather than the norm. Within the narrowing budget priorities, the focus of UN Media Services should be on facilitating news coverage and programme-making by national and private production companies—for example by furnishing hard-to-get information and footage. When the decision is taken to make a UN documentary or other programme, co-production arrangements should be actively sought.

121. Another function of media services should be to assist the media with access to UN officials, keeping track of who is authorized to speak on behalf of the Organization on which issues, and seeking such authorization when it has not been pre-arranged. Greater access to a wider range of UN officials is a consistent request of the news media, even those who have established their own contacts. Reporters also find that Security Council processes remain opaque. There is no spokesman for the Security Council, as there is for the Secretary-General and the General Assembly. The Permanent Representatives and the missions of Member States prefer to give their own accounts of Security Council proceedings and decisions. Yet reporters feel that there is room for more informational briefing on the Security Council from the Spokesman's Office, working with the Department of Political Affairs and the Secretary-General. News access to other non-Secretariat officials can also be facilitated by the UN's media services, including for example the chairs of General Assembly committees and other UN intergovernmental bodies.

122. The UN has been largely responsive to demands for information rather than, as in most successful modern organizations, actively seeking platforms to assert its views. Media placement is central to the job of a dynamic media team. Part of the role of a media services team should be to assist UN officials in placing articles in news and current affairs publications, arranging for them to appear on interview programmes, and so forth, all in support of the general communications objectives. This task should include providing support to officials designated by the Secretary-General as issue spokesmen and to chairs of UN bodies, helping them to devise ways of implementing media strategies. Media training should be arranged as needed for those UN officials whose responsibilities require extensive speaking and media appearances. Both for communications staff and for staff in news-making departments, the prevailing reticence must give way to a proactive engagement with the news media.

Public Affairs

123. The individuals and organizations that make up civil society play ever more important roles in world affairs, and make up some of the most important constituencies of the United Nations. The support of these constituencies leverages political support for the UN, while their indifference or passivity allows minority isolationist or unilateralist voices to dominate the foreign policy debate in some settings. With the UN under great financial and political pressure, the relationship with these constituencies requires the same shift from reactive to proactive approaches that the Task Force recommended for media management. The Task Force therefore recommends a major emphasis in the Department of Communications on public affairs functions, including the development and management of approved advocacy campaigns, the cultivation of constituency relations, and the longer-term management of the UN's public image and support.

124. The public affairs function would include working with those legitimate and representative elements of civil society that are actively engaged with the United Nations, as well as trying to bring in and mobilize new constituencies. It would be the advocacy engine of the new communications structure, developing capacity in coalition-building and the management of issue campaigns, and taking full advantage of the increasing synergies with non-governmental groups that are concerned with the central subjects on the UN agenda and whose work is consistent with the UN Charter. The work of several existing offices and units contributes to this public affairs mandate and might therefore be consolidated to achieve it—including the functions of the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for External Affairs; speechwriting (which must continue to have a direct link to the Secretary-General); and the thematic, promotional and public liaison services of DPI.

125. While most of the public gains exposure to the United Nations through the mass media, many of its most active supporters are those who have some direct contact with the Organization. Contact can take many forms: visiting Headquarters, taking part in the NGO forum of a World Conference, reading a UN publication, having a personal encounter with a UN staff member, hearing a UN official speak, or visiting an exhibit about the Organization's work. Each of these encounters is potentially a source of strength—or weakness—for the UN.

126. Nearly 1 million visitors per year visit the site of the UN Headquarters in New York. Nearly half of them take a guided tour, but many are turned away for lack of tour capacity, in part because security considerations have limited the size of tour groups. Capacity needs to be expanded, and the tours made more attractive and professional. Exhibits on the tour route, for example, badly need updating, but no funds have been available for this purpose. The Task Force sees greater potential in the tour as a method of direct outreach to the public, and feels that the opportunity to tell the UN's story is not being fully exploited. We suggest that the Department of Communications explore the possibility of organizing the tour service in cooperation with a very high-quality private operator. The tours, in fact, began as

a service provided by the UN Association and were taken over by the UN as the demand outgrew UNA's capacity. Returning them to private hands, if possible with a pro bono element in the contract, may be a low-cost way to revitalize the service and increase the UN's already considerable appeal as a "tourist attraction". Specialized tours, designed for groups with particular interests, could perhaps draw in new audiences.

127. The Task Force feels strongly that UN public affairs efforts should in particular target educational institutions and youth organizations, and develop programmes for children of all ages—including the very young. Programmes such as the Model UNs should be strongly supported, along with innovative means of getting appealing and informative UN materials into school and university curricula. Student groups should be encouraged to visit UN offices, and materials on issues of concern to the UN developed for use in television and radio programming that appeals to young audiences. The internship programme for college students should be enhanced.

128. Part of the task of public affairs should also be to work with the USG/C to design communications strategies to address problems that arise in the relationship between the UN and particular Member States—whether host countries, large donors, or countries involved in major UN operations. For example, a concerted campaign clearly is needed currently to address the crisis in UN-US relations.

Information Resources

129. An open, transparent and accessible United Nations is more able to influence policy and build consensus than one that is perceived as secretive and remote. Moreover, the UN has an obligation to provide information about its work to many audiences, starting with the delegations of the Member States and the Secretariat staff. It also must respond to the information needs of scholars, lawyers, non-governmental organizations and the general public. Information resources are the essential raw materials of the UN communications efforts. The number of records of proceedings and documents that are classified (restricted access) should be kept to a minimum, and restrictions should be lifted as soon as possible—certainly after a standard period of time has passed.

130. The existing Library and Publications Division is the core of information resources at the UN. The Task Force recommends that the existing Division's strong effort to incorporate new information technology into the work of the Library be continued and supported with appropriate equipment and personnel. We found few areas of the existing information structure in which UN personnel and procurement practices were more of an obstacle to best practices than here. The growing importance of the Internet as a fourth medium widely accessible at relatively low cost leads us to suggest that Internet support should be seen as a key task which should be properly resourced and responsible for managing the UN Home Page and its linkages. With the Home Page already drawing nearly 4 million hits per month, it is already one of the most important sources of public information about the UN.

UN Communications Services

131. The most problematical of the existing information structures the Task Force examined were the UN information centres (UNICs). Cutbacks in budget and personnel have left too many UNICs below critical mass for performing a meaningful communications role, and the experience of integrating them into UN offices under a Resident Coordinator has not been uniformly productive. Only 62 of 185 UN Member States host UNICs, and there is no systematic structure for establishing good two-way channels for information flow in countries where there is no UNIC. The largest amounts of money are spent in the most information-rich countries—that is, the western industrialized states (not entirely surprising since operating costs and local salaries are much higher there). In general, the UNICs are felt to be delivering too little for the proportion of the communications budget they consume (approximately 38 per cent of the information budget and 47 per cent of DPI staff).

132. With decentralization as a central goal of the restructuring of UN communications, the state of the UNICs is a subject of great concern and has prompted the Task Force to consider radical measures. We recommend a thorough restructuring of the UNIC network. A change of name may not be necessary, but for purposes of clarity and to distinguish the existing centres from the proposed, we refer here to United Nations Communications Services (UNaCS) as the successors to the UNICs.

133. The Task Force proposes two different, flexible country-level models for UNaCS, combined with a unifying regional structure and headquarters oversight.

134. The model for industrialized countries is designed to root UN communications much more firmly in the opinion-making structures of the Member State. The Task Force recommends that the Communications Department explore, on a country-by-country basis, the possibility of forming creative partnerships with the NGO sector to amplify the outreach of the UN Communications Service through joint programmes. The UNICEF National Committees provide something of a model for the intended result. This kind of arrangement would encourage strong local buy-ins to UN communications strategies, facilitate local fund-raising, and provide a vehicle for enlisting more prominent national private-sector spokesmen for the UN. The UN would hire locally to staff the communications functions.

135. In developing countries, the Task Force recommends that the integration of the Communications Services into the responsibilities of the Resident Coordinator should be completed, but with a much stronger system of feedback and accountability. UNIC staff should become a Communications Services group under the UN Resident Coordinator, who would be responsible to the head of the Communications Department for developing a plan for how the UN's global themes can best be adapted and articulated locally. The Resident Coordinator would become, in effect, the UN Secretariat spokesman in-country, and communications must be understood as a central element of his or her mandate. The

Department of Communications should have an active role in evaluating the Resident Coordinator's performance in implementing communications strategy.

136. As in the industrialized countries, the UNaCS professional communications staff in developing countries should be locally hired. They would be selected by the regional UNaCS director, and report to the regional director through the local UN Resident Coordinator.

137. The Task Force would like to emphasize that at the country level, we see no advantage in bringing in international staff to perform communications tasks in either industrialized or developing countries. When the UNIC Director exercised a quasi-diplomatic role, there was perhaps some logic to this. Now that the function is clearly elaborated as one of credible local communications (and UN Resident Coordinators are in place in more settings), this logic has evaporated. Now, on the contrary, we think that both the implementation of UN communications strategy in locally adapted terms and the flow of information from the country level to UN Headquarters is likely to be enhanced by the employment of experienced, media-wise, local communications professionals.

138. The emphasis here on coordinated UN strategies would not crowd out the individual campaigns of UNICEF, UNHCR and others. Rather, it would be built around them to reinforce common themes and ensure coherent overall positioning of the UN system.

139. The Task Force recommends that a small number of regional hubs back up these country-level UNaCS. These would be fully fledged, free-standing Communications Service Centres to support the network of UNaCS and to cover communications with countries that have no UNaCS. The locations within a region would be chosen on the basis of their communications infrastructure, widespread use of the local language, cost and ease of access. They would be professionally staffed by a core of international civil servants and would oversee the UNaCS in their networks as well as working in the host country. Those places where there are concentrations of UN activities, such as Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Santiago and Bangkok already have budgets for communications and are natural regional hubs. Vienna, for example, is well placed to service the UNaCS of Central and Eastern Europe, as is Bangkok with respect to Southeast Asia. The functions of the regional hubs would include technical assistance to the UNaCS they cover, management of region-wide advocacy campaigns and channelling information from the field into the UN communications system for wider dissemination.

140. The local communications staff will be key to the success of the UNaCS network. We recommend that the UN invest seriously in training and equipping them. Local staff need to be able to take full advantage of the information resources available through the UN, and can feed local information back into the UN communications structures. In the developing countries in particular, investment in local staff is a contribution to local capacity-building in

modern communications techniques and technology. UNDP could reinforce the developmental impact of this approach by expanding communications as a programme area.

141. This decentralized model requires strong technical support, clear chains of command, consistency of message, and accountability for real impact, all of which must be coordinated in the UNaCS in the office of the USG for Communications. Meaningful decentralization also requires adequate resources. In particular, the ratio of fixed costs to operating funds must be adjusted so that productive, innovative programmes can be carried out locally.

Transition to a new communications structure

142. In establishing this Task Force, the Secretary-General expressed his determination to tackle one of the principal challenges the United Nations faces today: communicating the relevance of its mission to an increasingly sceptical and budget-conscious world. The members of the Task Force hope that this report will set in motion a process that will lead to a dramatic reorientation of communication and information, helping to bring greater clarity to the mission of the Organization and building strong, universal support for it.

143. The transition from Task Force report to a new strategic communications function at the UN which delivers strong nationally tailored communications programmes is a major undertaking. It requires the support of Governments, through the General Assembly; a dynamic and experienced communications team; a major refocusing of personnel and financial resources behind the functional priorities outlined in this report; and the empowerment of country-level communications programmes.

144. Above all, however, it requires vision. The UN must open itself to communications, embracing public diplomacy as the means of building and sustaining support for positive changes in global cooperation on the problems that concern real people. Its present muffled voice will neither silence its critics nor mobilize its friends around a new vision of UN leadership.